

CLAIMS:

1. A method of commercial Internet-based communication with a user, comprising:
 - a first entity receiving from the user a user communication address;
 - the first entity transmitting a unique identifier associated with the user to a second entity;
 - 5 the first entity maintaining the user communication address in secrecy from the second entity;
 - the second entity accessing a database containing past Internet activity information associated with a multitude of Internet users, and determining a past Internet activity associated with the unique identifier;
 - based on the past activity of the user, the second entity communicating to the first entity
 - 10 whether a direct communication to the user is warranted; and
 - if direct communication is warranted, the first entity sending a direct communication to the user communication address.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein the user communication address is an email address.
3. The method of claim 1 including the first entity establishing the unique identifier, and associating
- 15 the identifier with a unique device identifier assigned to the user by the second entity.
4. The method of claim 3 wherein transmitting the unique identifier includes transmitting the device identifier.
5. The method of claim 1 including the first entity transmitting the unique identifier for a plurality of users, and the second entity based on the past activity of the users, identifying a subset of the
- 20 users to receive a selected treatment.
6. 5 including the second entity transmitting to the first entity a report listing the unique identifiers associated with the users to receive the selected treatment.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the database containing past Internet activity information associated with a multitude of Internet users is maintained to exclude user communication addresses.

8. A method of facilitating commercial Internet-based communication with a plurality of users,
5 comprising:

receiving from an Internet publisher a communication including a plurality of unique user identifiers, each associated with one of the users;

accessing a database containing a record of past Internet activity information for each of the users;

10 retrieving the associated record for each user;

for each user, based on the record, selecting a communication strategy;

transmitting a report to the publisher identifying, for at least a plurality of the users, the unique user identifier and the selected communication strategy.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein the selected communication strategy includes a proposed email
15 message.

10. The method of claim 8 wherein receiving a communication includes receiving a unique device identifier associated with the unique identifier, and associating the identifier with a unique device identifier previously assigned to the user by the second entity.

11. The method of claim 8 wherein the database containing past Internet activity information
20 associated with a multitude of Internet users is maintained to exclude user communication addresses.

12. The method of claim 8 wherein the publisher collects and secretly maintains user address information, and addresses a communication to the user based on the user address information,

and establishes the content of a message to the user based on the selected communication strategy.

13. A method of generating email messages based on past web browsing activity by users, comprising:

5 a web publisher collecting a user communication address and a device cookie from a user visiting a web site of the web publisher;

the publisher generating a unique anonymous identifier for the user;

the web publisher storing the user communication address in conjunction with the identifier;

10 the publisher transmitting the identifier and the device cookie to a second entity that maintains a database of past web browsing activity associated with the cookie, the database contents being maintained in secrecy from the publisher;

the publisher retaining the user communication address in secrecy from the second entity;

the second entity analyzing the past web browsing activity associated with the user's cookie;

15 based on the past web browsing activity of the user, the second entity communicating to the publisher the unique anonymous identifier and an associated proposed communication strategy;

based on the unique anonymous identifier, the publisher looking up the user communication address, and

the publisher sending a message having content based on the proposed communication strategy to the user communication address.

20 14. The method of claim 13 including the publisher generating message content for the user based on the proposed communication strategy.

15. The method of claim 13 wherein the message content includes message text for transmission to the user.

16. The method of claim 13 wherein the publisher storing the user communication address includes indexing the address in a database based on the unique anonymous identifier, and looking up the user communication address includes locating the unique anonymous identifier in the database.

17. A method of generating email messages based on past web browsing activity by users,

5 comprising:

a web publisher collecting a user communication address and a device cookie from a user visiting a web site of the web publisher;

the publisher storing the user communication address in conjunction with the cookie;

10 the publisher transmitting the cookie to a second entity that maintains a database of past web browsing activity associated with the cookie, the database contents being maintained in secrecy from the publisher;

the publisher retaining the user communication address in secrecy from the second entity;

the second entity analyzing the past web browsing activity associated with the user's cookie;

15 based on the past web browsing activity of the user, the second entity communicating to the publisher the cookie and an associated proposed communication strategy;

based on the cookie, the publisher looking up the user communication address, and

the publisher sending a message having content based on the proposed communication strategy to the user communication address.

20 18. The method of claim 17 including the publisher generating message content for the user based on the proposed communication strategy.

19. The method of claim 17 wherein the message content includes message text for transmission to the user.

20. The method of claim 17 wherein the publisher storing the user communication address includes indexing the address in a database based on the cookie, and looking up the user communication address includes locating the cookie in the database.

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